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AUTHOR Karr, Jo Ann
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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the development of collaborative assessment models, using a laboratory study of rocks by middle school students as an example. It focuses on the use of collaborative assessment as part of an ongoing classroom process that involves the teacher, student, peers, and a family member. A schedule of checkpoints can be developed for each evaluation to monitor progress and achievement over the course of a project or unit. Reflective notes about how to improve the next lab can be written right in the lab by both the teacher and students. Rubrics (the criteria to be evaluated) need to be set up for each person examining the designated activity. The selection of different rubrics for multiple tiers of evaluators provides the student with feedback from varying perspectives to regulate how he or she proceeds in future learning activities. Grades can be determined based on either performance in relation to others or performance in relationship to a specific standard. Sample rating charts are included. Contains four references. (MDM)

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COLLABORATIVE ASSESSMENT

by Jo Ann Karr, Ed.D.

ED 376 961

Developing a plan for truly "authentic" assessment begins by examining how assessment can be conducted as an ongoing process in the context of classroom instruction. (Eby, 1994, Reutzel, D., 1992). Tierney, Carter, Desai (1991) have found that collaborative assessment empowers students to take control of their own learning. With these two guidelines in mind, we can consider how the process of creating authentic assessment could be embedded in the work plan for an integrated unit.

By roughing out the content of the unit, as the first step, performance criteria are established, the assessment plan can tap the key learning activities. By first outlining the learning activities that will be used to help children understand concepts and the procedure for investigating the topics, the teacher can then prioritize the essential points to evaluate formally and then arrange others to give feedback without risk of a low mark or grade. (Routman, 1991)

An outline of the major learning experiences for a middle school study of rocks illustrates how this might be done. Within a thematic unit, "*Yourself and the Community,*" the focus of the science study is on rocks from the state and the community. The children collect rocks around their home and on a scavenger trip in a larger area. In addition to the rocks in the lab collection, pictures of rocks are gathered. Procedures for examining the rocks are laid out. Lab teams test for hardness, notation of color, and fragmentation when broken open. Results and

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observations are recorded in lab books and characteristics are matched with reference books to determine the type of rock being examined. Follow up reading about one or more types of rocks is done along with viewing a video and a group discussion. The culminating activity is an oral report to the rest of the class to share the results of the investigation, which was done over a ten day period. Now that we have an overview of the content activities for the study of rocks, the assessment plan can be developed.

There are several contributors to a collaborative assessment process: the teacher, the student (self-evaluation), peers, and a family member. A schedule of checkpoints for each evaluation needs to be developed to monitor progress and achievement across the two week project period. The lab process includes a checklist of things that needed to be completed. The lab team monitors the checklist, encouraging fellow group members to stay on task (peer review). If all items are accomplished, the teacher records a satisfactory mark and a summary comment. Reflective notes about how to improve in the next lab could be written right in the lab book by both the teacher and the student. Work procedures, cooperativeness, completion of daily task and helpfulness to lab team would be rated by the student's peers and the student. All of the assessment activities gives the students feedback, but the oral report as the culminating activity has the most weight in this particular unit. Rubrics, the criteria to be evaluated, need to be set up for each person examining the designated

activity.

The sample rating charts that follow were drawn up by a middle school team. They brain-stormed the criteria and then agreed on the team standards for the oral report. It was decided that the list should be kept short. Before being used, the four evaluation charts should be previewed by the students to check for clarity and understanding of the rubrics. Items may be added or reworded by the teacher so that the final list represents the criteria to be used for assessment. A multiple tier approach to evaluation is used in order to provide the student with varying perspectives. Each assessment is given to aid the student in celebrating what went well while noting areas to be strengthened.

TEACHER EVALUATION/ORAL REPORT

Directions: Circle one response per item.

	Effective				*Needs Improvement*
1. Communication					
. *Eye contact, voice tone,projection*	5	4	3	2	1
2. Content					
. *Description of lab investigation*	5	4	3	2	1
. *Explanation of characteristics of rock*	5	4	3	2	1
. *Accuracy of map showing location*	5	4	3	2	1
. *Citation of references (here information was found)*	5	4	3	2	1
. *Discussion of the value and industrial use of the rock (for community, state and potential of use/benefit to self)*	5	4	3	2	1
3. Overall Rating	5	4	3	2	1

Comments:

Peer Evaluation/Oral Report

Directions: Circle one response per item.

	Effective				*Needs Improvement*
1. Easy to listen to and follow what was being reported.	*5*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*
2. Information reported about the rock was clear and helped me understand about their rock.	*5*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*
3. Reporter used charts and maps and other reference material to illustrate the report.	*5*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*
4. Overall Evaluation	*5*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*

Comments:

Family Member Evaluation/Oral Report

Directions: Circle One response for each item

l. Time was spent gathering information and studying about rocks.

Yes No

2. Discussion about rocks showed the student was learning a lot of information about them. *Yes No*

3. The charts and display helped me understand what the student was doing. *Yes No*

4. I would rate work at home preparing for this report as:

Very Effective				*Needs Improvement*
5	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*

Comments:

Self-Evaluation/Oral Report

Directions: Circle one response per item.

		Very Effective				*Needs Improvement*
1.	*I followed the suggested procedure for studying about my type of rock.*	*5*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*
2.	*I only asked for help after trying to figure it out first.*	*5*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*
3.	*I located at least 2 references about my rock and made notes in my own words.*	*5*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*
4.	*I practiced my report.*	*5*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*
5.	*My charts, maps, and display were understood by the audience.*	*5*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*
6.	*My communication style made the report interesting to the audience.*	*5*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*
7.	*I feel this oral report represents what I learned about rocks in the last 2 weeks.*	*5*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*
8.	*I did the best I could in presenting the facts about my type of rock.*	*5*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*
Overall, I would rate myself		*5*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*

Comments:

*The best part of my report was*_____.

*The area I need the most improvement is*_____.

When completed the rating scales are placed in the student's portfolio. If the portfolio needs to be converted to report card grades, a decision about how to grade the collected data will depend on the frame of reference used, either performance in relation to other groups or performance in relationship to specified standards. In the first case, grades are determined by comparing one student's achievement with the achievement of the other members of the class. The second type is a method for establishing a standard of mastery and awarding grades according to the extent of mastery each student achieves (Gronlund and Linn,1990). In advance of implementing the unit, the middle school team devising the assessment for this unit planned to use both by collecting information about the investigative process and presentation performance as well as by checking for content knowledge that matches district-wide objectives under state science learning goals. Relative weighting of different activities depends on the instructional team's view of prior knowledge of the children, the children's ability to process new knowledge and the student's ability to represent their learning in the different forms asked for in the unit.

Eby and Hunt (1994) consider the major reason for failure in elementary school to be that the students do not know what they are excepted to do in order to succeed. Unclear and vague expectations lead students to get discouraged and fearful of turning in end products, giving speeches or taking a test. In the illustration given above, the teacher team attempted to

describe clearly what is expected in a unit of study, which allows the students to capture appropriate information and to prepare to represent their knowledge . Students were given guidelines about when it is appropriate to help each other and they were also encouraged to demonstrate their learning at home. The parent, or when not available an older family member, contributes to the evaluation of the student's learning and hopefully gains an awareness of the goals for the thematic unit.

In summary, selection of different rubrics for a multiple tier of evaluators gives the child varying perspectives to regulate how she/he proceeds in future learning activities. Tierney, Carter, and Desai (1991, p.59) suggest,

> A reasonable message is given to students about learning and performance by utilizing assessment procedures that value the work of students in a variety of areas over an extended period of time. Students learn that quality work takes time and that input from others, while in process, facilitates depth of thinking.

Teacher teams plan the final evaluation instruments by prioritizing the brain-stormed rubrics and examining their worth as they devise what to include. Students are asked for input and the final rating charts are drawn up before the unit begins. The teacher's final assessment of the student's effort for the unit of study is based on the evaluation of all the raters. Before the thematic unit actually begins, the question of assessment is addressed along with the other classroom activities which will comprise the unit. Students not only know the criteria but they are involved in putting the plan together.

Collaborative assessment is a useful and practical measure

which seems to fit the planning and teaching style of those practitioners who seek to involve students in their own learning.

Rubrics discussed here, have been used to enhance communication of achievement and allow the student an opportunity to reflect on the best way to complete tasks and to share their learning with the different audiences concerned about their educational development.

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